

Message Text

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64

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 IO-10 DPW-01 AID-05 /065 W

----- 043523

O 140240Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3626

INFO COMUSSAG NKP THAILAND IMMEDIATE

CINCPAC HONOLULU IMMEDIATE

COMIPAC HONOLULU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 2847

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS VS

SUBJECT: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR 3

FOLLOWING TEL RECEIVED FROM BIEN HOA MARCH 13 SENT ACTION
EMBASSY SAIGON IN USDAO SAIGON H/W REPEATED TO YOU. QTE:

C O N F I D E N T I A L BIEN HOA 151

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, VS

SUBJ: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR3

1. I MET WITH MR3 COMMANDER, LTG TOAN, AT 1845 MAR 12 AFTER
HIS RETURN FROM TAY NINH PROVINCE TO REVIEW THE SITUATION
IN MR3, PARTICULARLY IN TAY NINH. DURING THE DAY THE NVA/VC
BROADENED THE SCOPE OF ITS TAY NINH OFFENSIVE WITH TWO TANK-
SUPPORTED THRUSTS FROM CAMBODIA INTO SOUTHERN TAY NINH WEST
OF THE VAM CO DONG RIVER. TOAN BELIEVES THAT PENDING THE FURTHER
DEVELOPMENT OF NVA:VC ATTACKS, PARTICULARLY SOME MOVEMENT NORTH
AND WEST OF TAY NINH CITY, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY TO SAY DEFINITELY
WHERE THE HEAVIEST ATTACKS WILL COME IN THE PROVINCE. THUS A
MORE DEFINITIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE OUTLOOK FOR TAY NINH MUST
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AWAIT FURTHER INDICATIONS AS TO WHETHER, WHEN AND WITH WHAT FORCE

THE NVA/VC WILL ATTACKS FROM THE NORTH AND THE WEST OF THE CITY. TOAN SAID THAT THE ONLY SURPRISE HE HAD HAD SO FAR IS THAT THE OTHER SIDE MAY HAVE ENGAGED TWO REGTS OF THE 5TH NVA DIV STRIKING FROM CAMBODIA RATHER THAN JUST THE E-6 REGT AS HE HAD EXPECTED. AT THE SAME TIME TOAN BELIEVES THAT THE NVA/VC HAD NOT EXPECTED THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO DEPLOY SUCH LARGE ARVN FORCES AS HE HAS IN TAY NINH AND THAT THE OTHER SIDE WILL HAVE A MORE DIFFICULT BATTLE THAN THEY HAD EXPECTED. TOAN'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE VARIOUS TAY NINH BATTLE AREAS FOLLOW.

2. TRI TAM. TOAN SAID THAT AS OF THAT TIME THE EQUIVALENT OF ABOUT ONE COMPANY WAS STILL HOLDING OUT ON THE SOUTHERN EDGE OF TRI TAM CITY EAST OF THE SAIGON RIVER AND WAS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH ONE OF THE TWO RF OUTPOSTS STILL HOLDING OUT ON ROUTE 239 WEST OF TRI TAM BETWEEN THE SAIGON RIVER AND LTL-26. THE 3RD ARMORED BRIGADE REMAINS UNDER ORDERS TO PUSH THROUGH TO TRI TAM IF POSSIBLE BUT HAD BEEN STOPPED ON ROUTE 239 AT ABOUT XT 4144 BY DETERMINED NVA/VC RESISTANCE. HE SAID THAT A CASUALTY ESTIMATE ON BOTH SIDES WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE FOR SEVERAL DAYS BUT ALL INDICATIONS ARE THAT THE NVA/VC TOOK VERY HEAVY CASUALTIES AT TRI TAM, LOSING ALSO 8 TANKS. TOAN THOUGHT THAT PERHAPS UP TO A BATTALION OF 3 RF BNS DEFENDING (SOME IN THE OUTPOSTS WEST OF TRI TAM WHERE THE DEFENSE CONTINUES) HAD BEEN LOST DURING THE TRI TAM FIGHTING. THE TRI TAM DISTRICT OFFICER, MAJOR VO VAN QUI, WHOSE EXCELLENT DEFENSE PLAN AND COURAGEOUS DEFENSE OF TRI TAM HAVE BEEN PRAISED BY ALL CONCERNED, WAS EVACUATED BY HELICOPTER WITH HEAD WOUNDS AND TAKEN TO THE MR3 FORWARD CP AT GO DAU HA.

3. LTL-26/KHIEM HANH AREA. TOAN SAID ONE TASK FORCE OF THE 3RD ARMORED WOULD REMAIN IN RESERVE AT KHIEM HANH (AT THE SAME TIME PROBING EASTWARD TOWARD BOI LOI WOODS) WHILE TWO OF THE TASK FORCES WORK FARTHER NORTH WITH ONE OF THEM TO TRY TO REACH TRI TAM. THE TASK FORCES ARE MOVING TOWARD TRI TAM WITH CAUTION TO AVOID ENTRAPMENT IN AMBUSHES WHICH ARE ALMOST CERTAIN TO HAVE BEEN SET FOR REINFORCEMENTS TO TRI TAM. TOAN SAID THAT OVER A 2-DAY PERIOD 30-40 ROUNDS OF 130MM ARTILLERY HAD HIT THE KHIEM HANH AREA AROUND XT4436, PROBABLY FIRED FROM MICHELIN PLANTATION.

4. ATTACKS WEST OF THE VAM CO DONG. AT 0600 MAR 12 TANK-
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SUPPORTED ATTACKS HAD BEEN LAUNCHED FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER AREA AGAINST BEN CAO (XT202331) AND ALONG ROUTE 1 TOWARD GO DAU HA. THE ATTACK ON ROUTE 1 WAS ALMOST CERTAINLY BY THE E-6 REGT, 5TH NVA DIV. THE ATTACK AGAINST BEN CAO COULD HAVE BEEN FROM THE E-6, ANOTHER REGT FROM THE 5TH NVA DIV, OR POSSIBLY FROM THE 205TH NVA REGT. THE RF AT BEN CAO HAD HELD WELL DESTROYING TWO TANKS DURING THE DAY'S FIGHTING. THE SITUATION ON ROUTE 1 WAS LESS CLEAR. TANKS HAD HIT THE OUTPOST AT AN THANH (XT295247)

WHICH HELD. OTHER NVA/VC FORCES, HOWEVER, WERE EAST OF THERE ON ROUTE 1 NEAR GO DAU HA ABOUT XT3524 NEAR A PF OUTPOST. DURING THE DAY TOAN MOVED ONE BATTALION OF THE 48TH REGT (18TH ARVN DIV) FROM ITS RESERVE POSITION INTO BLOCKING POSITION JUST WEST OF THE VAM CO DONG AND GO DAU HA ON ROUTE 1. TOAN SAID THAT ENGAGEMENT OF A SECOND REGT OF THE 5TH NVA DIV IN THIS QUARTER WOULD REPRESENT MORE ENEMY FORCES THAN HE HAD EXPECTED IN THE TAY NINH FIGHTING BUT IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE ATTACKING FORCES AT BEN CAO ARE FROM ANOTHER 5TH DIV REGT. IN ANY EVENT, TOAN BELIEVES THAT THE 5TH DIV IS RELATIVELY WEAK FROM ITS EXTENDED DEPLOYMENT IN MR4 AND THAT THIS THREAT FROM THE SOUTH WAS MANAGEABLE. VNAF CAUGHT A COLUMN OF TANKS NEAR THE CAMBODIAN BORDER MAR 12 AND COUNTED 13 OUT OF ACTION AFTER ITS STRIKE (8 OF THESE WERE STILL ON THE ROAD THE MORNING OF MAR 13 AND ARE CONSIDERED DESTROYED).

5. OTHER MATTERS.

A. TOAN WAS DISTURBED THAT HE HAD RECEIVED ORDERS TO RELEASE THE 7TH RANGER GROUP ON THE NIGHT OF MAR 12 FOR IMMEDIATE TRANSFER TO MR2. ONE OF THE 7TH'S BATTALIONS WAS DEPLOYED WITH THE 3RD ARMORED ON LTL-26 AND THE OTHER TWO IN NHON TRACH DISTRICT IN SOUTHERN BIEN HOA PROVINCE. THESE BATTALIONS WERE TAKEN AWAY FROM ONGOING OPERATIONS DURING THE NIGHT OF MAR 12-13 AND FLOWN TO MR2 ON THE MORNING OF THE 13TH.

B. TOAN CLOSED THE CONVERSATION WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT HE NEEDS MORE AIR STRIKES IN THE CURRENT SITUATION AND WOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR ANYTHING THOSE CONCERNED WITH MAP COULD DO ABOUT THIS NEED. HE SAID HE WAS ALSO WORRIED ABOUT ARTILLERY AMMO. FOR THE MOMENT HIS ARTILLERY AMMO ALLOCATIONS WILL DO BUT HE BELIEVES IT EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT AS THE NVA/VC INCREASINGLY EXPOSES ITSELF HE HAVE ENOUGH ARTILLERY AMMUNITION TO ACHIEVE

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MAXIMUM POSSIBLE DESTRUCTION OF ENEMY FORCES. PETERS UNQTE
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMBAT OPERATIONS, COMBAT ZONES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 14 MAR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SAIGON02847
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750089-0186
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750349/aaaabsdl.tel
Line Count: 156
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <28 JUL 2003 by KelleyW0>; APPROVED <20 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MILITARY SITUATION IN MR 3 FOLLOWING TEL RECEIVED FROM BIEN HOA MARCH 13 SENT ACTION
TAGS: MOPS, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006